

*Bipartisan legislation will address urgent need to improve treatment for veterans with traumatic brain injuries*

*May 5, 2010*

Washington, D.C. – A bipartisan bill authored by Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) to improve care for veterans was signed into law today. The legislation will help address the needs of veterans who have suffered traumatic brain injuries (TBI), a wound frequently sustained by service members in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Our men and women in uniform have earned the best possible medical care,” said Rep. McNerney. “It’s up to us to make sure they get that care when they return home. Unfortunately, the signature wounds of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are traumatic brain injuries. I wrote this law so that the Department of Veterans Affairs will be better equipped to provide treatment for our veterans who suffer from these severe injuries.”

Congressman McNerney’s bill helps develop policies for better care and rehabilitation of veterans with traumatic brain injuries by establishing a special panel to assess how well the VA treats veterans with TBI and make recommendations for improvement. It will also help establish TBI-specific education and training programs for VA health professionals.

“Our men and women in uniform put their lives on the line for our country,” said Rep. McNerney. “I will do everything I can to ensure that our veterans get the care and benefits they’ve earned.”

Vietnam veteran and local veterans advocate Tino Adame joined Congressman McNerney in recognizing the significance of this legislation.

“Congressman McNerney’s bill being signed into law is great news for veterans,” said Mr. Adame, who served in the U.S. Marine Corps. “The men and women who have fought for this country deserve the best possible medical treatment. The law Congressman McNerney wrote will help make sure veterans who have suffered severe injuries get the care they need.”

According to the Defense and Brain Injury Center, a collaboration of the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs, the leading cause of TBI among active duty military personnel serving in war zones are blasts. Other leading causes of TBI in military personnel include gunfire and shrapnel. Since 2000, the number of service members diagnosed with TBI has increased from 10,963 to 27,862 as of December 2009.

Congressman McNerney, a member of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, has made it

a top priority to work on legislation to address the needs of veterans. He has championed this bill since 2007 and the enactment of it into law represents a major legislative achievement.

Congressman McNerney's bill was signed into law today, May 5, 2010 as part of the comprehensive Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act.